

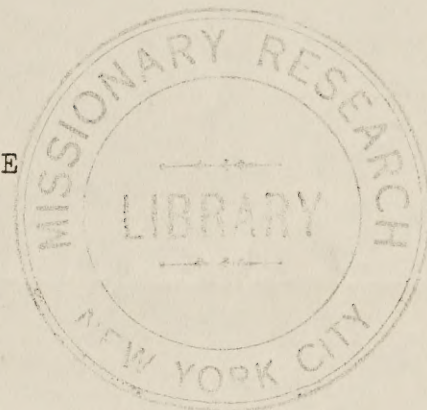
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THE FIRST CHRISTIAN YOUTH CONFERENCE
IN
INDIA AND PAKISTAN
by
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The year 1947 will go down in Christian history as a great landmark, for in it were held at least a dozen world gatherings. Significantly enough, most of these were concerned with Christian youth. The most important of these Christian youth conferences was Oslo, which brought together 1300 young men and women from 71 different countries of the world, representing almost every branch of the Christian Church as well as all important world Christian youth organizations. It is too early to gauge the results of that conference, but its significance may be summed up in one sentence: It was a call to Christian youth to accept, appropriate and proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That call has sounded around the globe, through those who were privileged to participate in it.

To the Christian youth of India and Pakistan the year 1947 brought two other events of great and far reaching significance, the political freedom of the country on the 15th of August, and the inauguration of the Church of South India on the 27th of September. The former meant the realization of a long-cherished dream - perhaps not the complete realization, for the partition of the country took away a great part of the thrill - the latter, the promise of one undivided Church of Jesus Christ.

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To a secular historian, the three events, namely, Oslo, the political freedom of the country, and the establishment of a united Church in South India, are unrelated happenings ^{are} and/matters of pure coincidence. But to a Christian who sees in the events of history the hand of God, they fit into a pattern ~~in~~ which reveals the purpose of God for the Christian youth of India and Pakistan. The first symbolizes a call, the second the field where the call must be answered, and the third the instrument through which the call is to be answered.

The Christian Youth Conference, which is being held at Allahabad from December 24-28, 1948, at which 300 selected delegates, representing the YMCA, the YWCA, the Student Christian Movement, the Christian Endeavour Union, the India Sunday School Union, and all the important Church Youth Organizations, will assemble, is designed to bring home to the Christian youth of India and Pakistan (Burma and Ceylon will also be represented) the significance and challenge of the events mentioned above. The theme of the Conference has, therefore, been chosen to be "The Call of the Hour." Around the main theme have been arranged the morning and evening addresses. The morning series of addresses will bring to the delegates the challenges of the present day, the Challenge of Freedom, the Challenge of Communism, the Challenge of Christian Vocation, and the Challenge of Social Action. These addresses will show that the freedom of the country has brought challenging tasks as well as challenging opportunities. Is political freedom an end in itself? Can the country truly prosper if its foundations are laid on godless materialism and crass opportunism? Has a Christian youth any obligation towards the solution of the problems and ills of the society around? Can he serve the Church and the non-Christian world around without a sense of a clear Christian call? These are some of the questions which will be dealt with in these addresses. The evening addresses will be devotional in nature, and will call the Christian youth to consecration and high endeavor. The place of the Bible in the life of youth as a standard of

faith and life, the relevance of the Church as his spiritual home and field of action, the importance of worship for his individual and corporate spiritual well-being, and the urgency of evangelism as his sacred duty, will form the basis of these addresses which are entitled "Youth and the Bible," "Youth and the Church," "Youth and Worship," and "Youth and Evangelism." In order that the delegates may not be hearers only, provision has been made in the program for daily Bible study and discussion. The Bible study will be based on the subjects of the evening addresses, and the discussion on the subjects of the morning addresses. Both Bible study and discussion will be done in groups, and the findings of each group will be presented at a plenary session on the last day. A special commission will discuss the future of Christian youth work in India and Pakistan, with special reference to cooperation and united action. Bible study and discussion outlines have been printed in pamphlet forms and have been sent to the delegates in advance. An excellent team of speakers, the majority of whom are nationals, has been secured, and due regard has been paid to younger leadership. There will be a fair number of visitors from abroad. As the conference is being held at Christmas time, due place has been given in the program to joyous festivity and solemn celebration. On Christmas eve carol singing and a play from Dorothy Sayer's, "The Man Born to be King," have been arranged. A choir from the hills of Assam is expected and should add to the joys of singing. On Christmas Day a special service has been planned in All Saints Cathedral at which the sermon will be preached by the Rev. Dr. M. T. Kennedy, the S. K. Datta Memorial lecturer now visiting the country. A Christmas at Home will be held in the afternoon of Christmas Day at which a large number of local Christian and non-Christian guests have been invited.

In order that the significance and message of the ecumenical movements may not go unheard, a special meeting has been arranged at which talks on the Oslo Conference and the Amsterdam Assembly will be given.

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The Conference is the first of its kind, and is one of the fruits of cooperation in Christian youth work now being effected through the Central Youth Committee of the Christian Council of India, Pakistan and Burma. The Committee is representative of all important Christian youth organizations and is served by one of the Council secretaries.

The Allahabad Conference is a great venture of faith. It is also a gift, a great Christmas gift to the Christian youth of India and Pakistan. A Christmas gift must both be received and given. What the Conference will mean to those who assemble, and through them to others, will depend upon how the delegates receive from and give to the Conference. We can all pray that Allahabad, 1948, may be the beginning of a great forward movement for the service of Christ's kingdom in and through the Christian youth of India and Pakistan.